

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 STATE 118175

ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-02 DHA-02
IO-13 /067 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:EESVENDSEN/MPH

APPROVED BY AF/W:RGHOUDEK

AF/P:RDUMAS (SUBS)

-----231637Z 007851 /44

O 231624Z MAY 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY FREETOWN IMMEDIATE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STATE 118175

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, SL

SUBJECT: US MEDIA AND GOSL

REF: FREETOWN 1644

1. REVIEW OF NEW YORK TIMES AND TIME MAGAZINE DOMESTIC EDITION SHOW NO RPT NO NEWS ARTICLES, DEROGATORY OR OTHERWISE, ON SIERRA LEONE SINCE ELECTIONS. WHILE ARTICLE COULD BE CONTAINED IN TIME INTERNATIONAL EDITIONS TO WHICH EMBASSY PRESUMABLY HAS ACCESS, WE SUSPECT RUMOR ACTUALLY REFERS TO LONDON TIMES EDITORIAL OF WHICH EMBASSY IS AWARE (FREETOWN 1620). DEPARTMENT HAS POUCHED EMBASSY COPY OF EDITORIAL.

2. ONLY ADVERSE ITEM IN MAJOR NEWSPAPER OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE IS LETTER FROM TINGA S. K. SEISAY, FORMER CONSUL

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 STATE 118175

GENERAL OF SIERRA LEONE IN NEW YORK, WHICH APPEARED IN MAY 20 EDITION OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR. LETTER IS HEADLINED "TROUBLE IN SIERRE LEONE," AND TEXT FOLLOWS:

QUOTE IT IS INDEED SAD THAT THE AMERICAN PRESS HAS GIVEN HARDLY ANY EXPOSURE TO THE ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY PRESIDENT SIAKA STEVENS' GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF

SIERRA LEONE, WEST AFRICA.

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY, 1977, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND SCHOOLCHILDREN HAVE BEEN THE FAVORED TARGET OF STEVENS' CUBAN-TRAINED INTERNAL SECURITY UNIT; THE NUMBER OF PERSONS KILLED RANGES FROM 60 TO 300 TO DATE.

ON THE LAST DAY OF JANUARY THIS YEAR, STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE STAGED A DEMONSTRATION AT THE FOURAH BAY COLLEGE CAMPUS IN THE CAPITAL, FREETOWN, DEMANDING STEVENS' RESIGNATION, FREE ELECTIONS, JOBS, AND FOOD. IN RETALIATION INTERNAL SECURITY UNIT TROOPS WERE SENT TO THE CAMPUS, AND UNARMED STUDENTS WERE BEATEN AND 16 WERE MURDERED.

PROTESTS SPREAD OVER THE CAPITAL WITH SCHOOLCHILDREN DEMONSTRATING. AGAIN INTERNAL SECURITY UNIT FORCES WERE CALLED IN, AND AN 8-YEAR OLD SCHOOL BOY WAS AMONG THOSE KILLED.

UNREST HAS SINCE SPREAD OVER THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. IN MID-MARCH, STEVENS DECIDED TO "GIVE IN" TO THE STUDENTS' DEMAND FOR ELECTIONS, AND DISSOLVED PARLIAMENT. HIS ONE-PARTY STATE ALLOWED TWO OTHER PARTIES TO STAND: THE OLD SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY, AND THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL PARTY, FORMED JUST WEEKS AGO.

CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT FROM THE BALLOT WAS THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WHICH WAS BANNED IN 1971, WHEN IT CONSTILIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 STATE 118175

TUTED A POWERFUL OPPOSITION TO STEVENS' OWN ALL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS.

GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPTS TO RIG THE ELCTIONS, HELD ON MAY 6, HAVE BROUGHT A FRESH WAVE OF VIOLENCE. "WEST AFRICA" (APRIL 24, 1977) REPORTS THAT 45 GOVERNMENT NOMINEES HAVE BEEN "RETURNED UNOPPOSED," AND THAT "AT LEAST SEVEN PERSONS WERE KILLED IN KENEMA ON NOMINATION DAY."

THE SITUATION IS REMINISCENT OF THE "ELECTIONS" IN 1973, WHEN HUNDREDS OF VOTERS WERE MASSACRED TO ENSURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WON ALL THE SEATS IN THE HOUSE.

THE PEOPLE OF SIERRA LEONE ARE SUFFERING UNTOLD HARDSHIPS UNDER STEVENS' REGIME: POVERTY AND STARVATION ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY; PEOPLE LIVE IN MORTAL FEAR, SEEING RELATIVES AND FRIENDS "SIMPLY DISAPPEAR."

HONORABLE OUTSTANDING MEN HAVE BEEN TRIED BY KANGAROO

COURTS AND EXECUTED (AMONG THEM BRIGADIER JOHN A BANGURA, BRIGADIER DAVID LANSANA, IBRAHIM TAQI, AND DR. MOHAMED FORNA).

A GROWING NUMBER OF EDUCATORS, ADMINISTRATORS AND POLITICIANS FROM SIERRA LEONE ARE TAKING REFUGE ABROAD. STUDENTS ABROAD, RELATED TO PERSONS "IN TROUBLE," ARE UNABLE TO RETURN FOR FEAR OF RETALIATION BY THE GOVERNMENT.

IS THIS NOT THE TIME WHEN U.S. GOVERNMENT CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS EVIDENT, FOR THE PRESS IN THIS FORTUNATE COUNTRY TO EXERCISE THE POWERFUL DETERRENT OF EXPOSING THE ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY AN ARMED AND RUTHLESS DICTATORSHIP AGAINST INNOCENT VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCE? UNQUOTE.

VANCE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, ALLEGATIONS, ATROCITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE118175
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EESVENDSEN/MPH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770183-0494
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770527/aaaaaxnu.tel
Line Count: 131
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3dacbf8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 FREETOWN 1644
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2404487
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US MEDIA AND GOSL
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SOPN, SL, (STEVENS, SIAKA P)
To: FREETOWN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3dacbf8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009